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ABSTRACT

This study reviewed the literature to trace the evolution and life cycles of seven management techniques related to higher education. The seven case studies involved analysis of a selected sample of periodical, monograph, and technical literature from 1960 to the present. The literature base on each management technique was reviewed in reference to the following aspects: essential characteristics of the management innovation, circumstances in which the innovation originally appeared, diffusion of the innovation into higher education, outcomes of the innovation in its original and higher education settings, and reasons for eventual abandonment of the technique. The seven management innovations considered were: (1) program planning budgeting system; (2) zero-based budgeting; (3) management by objectives; (4) strategic planning; (5) total quality management/continuous quality improvement; (6) business process reengineering; and (7) benchmarking. The analysis proposes stages in the life cycle of management fads within organizational sectors, suggests the lagged phases through which fads are diffused between the nonacademic and the academic sectors, and discusses similarities and differences in the fad adoption process in both academic and nonacademic systems. (Contains 28 references.) (DB)

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The Life Cycle of Academic Management Fads

Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, November 5-8, 1998, Miami Florida.

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This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held in Miami, Florida, November 5-8, 1998. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

The Life Cycle of Academic Management Fads

Institutions of higher education are always under pressure to become more efficient and effective. In response, many have attempted (either voluntarily or under mandate) to adopt new management systems and processes that were originally designed to meet the needs of (presumably) more efficient business or governmental organizations. One contemporary observer, referring to "the hum of corporate buzzwords" in the academy, has commented that "a person would be hard pressed these days to find a college that doesn't claim to be evaluating or reshaping itself through one of these approaches" (Nicklin, 1995, p. A33). This "hum" is not new; it has been a feature of the higher education landscape for at least the past 40 years.

Among the first of these processes was Program Planning Budgeting System (PPBS), initially developed by Rand for use by the Defense Department, and adopted by many higher education institutions in the early 1960's. Among the most recent are Business Process Reengineering (BPR), and Benchmarking. In between, business management scholars have documented over two dozen management innovations which were proposed between 1950 and 1990 (Pascale, 1991), some of which were adopted by institutions of higher education. The development and advocacy of new management approaches in both non-academic and academic management continues, and at an increasing pace.

In the business sector, these new ideas are often "presented as universally applicable quick-fix solutions - along with the obligatory and explicit caution that their recommendations are not quick fixes and will require substantial management understanding and commitment. As many managers will attest, the result has been a dazzling array of what are often perceived as management fads - fads that frequently become discredited soon after they have been widely propagated" (Eccles & Nohria, 1992, p. 7).

Many of these management innovations, when adopted by higher education, also exhibit the characteristics that led Allen and Chaffee (1981) to define them as fads. They are usually borrowed from other settings, applied without full consideration of their limitations, presented either as complex or deceptively simple, rely on jargon, and emphasize rational decision making. Following Allen and Chaffee's lead, this paper uses the term "fad" to refer collectively and non-pejoratively to specified higher education management innovations, a use consistent with the definition in Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (p. 444) of a fad as "a practice or interest followed for a time with exaggerated zeal." Not all management innovations are fads. Some (for example, fund accounting) may diffuse and be adopted rapidly through institutional networks to become an accepted part of the system. On the other hand, fads, by definition, are ultimately not adopted throughout an organizational system. Fads therefore may be thought of as rejected innovations.

This study is grounded in two basic propositions: first, that it is possible to use the literature to trace the evolution of a management fad from the time of its creation to its eventual abandonment; second, that management fads may diffuse between non-academic and academic systems. These are not novel notions. Informal observations of one or both of them have been noted previously by higher education scholars. For example, commenting on the movement of management innovations between the non-academic and academic sectors, Baldridge and Okimi (1982) said "Every six months, it seems, a new fad sweeps through management circles. First it strikes the business community, then government, and finally education. Think back a few years and the mind stumbles on the carcasses of fads once touted as the newest 'scientific' way to manage an organization." These fads may "arrive at higher education's doorstep five years after their trial in business, often just as corporations are discarding them" (Marchese, 1991, p. 7). Once the fad has been introduced into higher education, a standard sequence is suggested: "First, the system will be widely acclaimed in the higher education literature; institutions will eagerly ask how best to implement it. Next, the publication of a number of case studies will appear, coupled with testimonials to the system's effectiveness. Finally, both the term and the system will gradually disappear from view" (Chaffee, 1985, p. 133). Management fads in higher education thus appear to follow the cycle of educational innovations in general: "early enthusiasm, widespread dissemination, subsequent disappointment, and eventual decline" (Slavin, 1989, p. 752). The movement of fads has been noted not only between different sectors in the same country, but also between the same sectors in different countries, and America may be the world leader in such management exports. Neave (1997, p. 278) has commented "never in the recent history of higher education in Europe have we seen such a frenzy of model exportation, from North America to Western Europe and from thence eastwards. We have a dangerous faith in management models, often developed in organisational settings other than the university, and no less in their capacity to act as a 'quick fix'."

The comments of these previous observers have for the most part been anecdotal and casual. In contrast, this study takes a more systematic approach to understanding the management fad phenomenon. It is based on an analysis of the literature of academic management fads to construct their "life cycles" from the time of their diffusion into the higher education system until the time of their eventual abandonment, reinvention, or partial incorporation. These life cycles, in turn, might reveal patterns which would permit the construction of a Weberian ideal type, a conceptualization "based on observations of reality that are designed to make comparisons possible" (Rogers, 1995, p. 263). Such a model might improve our understanding of the effects of management innovations in the past, and give both institutional and political policy makers a context in which to understand the possible trajectories of academic management techniques that may be introduced in the future.

The life cycle developed here is based on data from seven case studies in which the cases were not institutions but the natural histories of specific management techniques. Each case

study[1] was based on an analysis of a selected sample of periodical, monograph, and technical literature for the period 1960 to the present, describing and analyzing seven widely discussed management techniques which were advocated for use in higher education. The management innovations considered were Program Planning Budgeting System (PPBS), Zero-Based Budgeting (ZBB), Management by Objectives (MBO), Strategic Planning, Total Quality Management/Continuous Quality Improvement (TQM/CQI), Business Process Reengineering (BPR) and Benchmarking. The literature sampled was selected to include foundational works for each technique both in and outside higher education, repeatedly cited journal articles, conference presentations and fugitive materials identified through the ERIC data base (*ERIC on CD-ROM, 1966-1979, 1980-September 1996*, 1995), and a snowball sample of other references cited in these materials. Each case interrogated the literature data base to ask the following questions:

What were the essential characteristics of the management innovation?
When, in what setting, and under what circumstances did the innovation originally appear?
How did the innovation diffuse into higher education?
What were the outcomes of the innovation in its original and higher education settings?
When, and for what reasons, was the management technique abandoned?

The cases were then reviewed iteratively using a process of explanation building (Yin, 1984) to develop the cross case analysis presented in this paper. The analysis proposes the stages in the life cycle of management fads within organizational sectors, suggests the lagged phases through which fads are diffused between the non-academic and the academic sectors, and discusses some similarities and differences in the fad adoption process in both academic and non-academic systems.

The Life Cycle Stages of the Fads Process

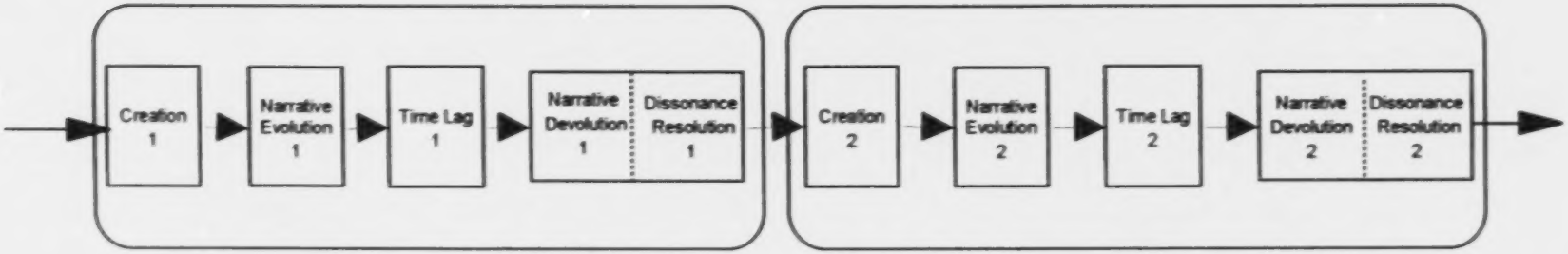
The cross-case analysis found a consistent and predictable five-stage cycle which describes the trajectory of management fads: creation, narrative evolution, time lag, narrative devolution, and dissonance resolution. The stage process is depicted in Figure 1. This section describes the fad trajectory as it appears within either the non-academic or academic organizational sectors. The following section considers how the innovation moves between organizational sectors.

Figure 1 about here

Stage 1: Creation. A crisis is claimed to exist in an organizational sector, usually related to an enacted environment (Weick, 1979) of the larger social system (for example, the Cold War, recession) or an organizational subsystem within it (for example, lack of international competitiveness in business, or lack of attention to customer needs in higher education). Present modes of operation are alleged to be inadequate to addressing the crisis, and the adoption of a

[1] These seven case studies, and citations to the 250 sources on which they are based, will be available in a book with the working title How Management Trends Affect Higher Education to be published by Jossey-Bass (forthcoming).

Figure 1. The Life Cycle Stages of the Fads Process



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new management technique is proposed to solve the problem. The new technique is supported by advocates (often, paid consultants whose livelihood depends on creating and disseminating this new management technique), by dramatic but unverified narratives by external champions, and by enthusiastic statements of early institutional adopters. The stories, or narratives (Roe, 1994) developed in this creation stage include claims of unusual success.

As a consequence of these claims, additional institutions participating in common interorganizational networks (Rogers, 1995), and accepting the claims of crisis, are encouraged to adopt the new technique. The technique is initially presented in simplified terms which appear to be so consistent with common sense and with rationalized organizational myths related to efficiency and effectiveness (Meyer & Rowan, 1992) as to make counter-arguments difficult. Advocates state that, unlike previous techniques (which may be explicitly denigrated as fads), the technique now being promoted will significantly improve core organizational processes and functions. Promises of extraordinary outcomes are made, and resistors are painted as traditionalists unwilling or unable to respond to change. The technique is often presented as both necessary and sufficient to transform the organizational sector; true believers may present their views with messianic zeal, and suggest that the success, perhaps even the survival, of the sector depends on adopting this innovation. Adoption of the technique may be supported, or in some cases driven, by the availability of a new technology that appears to make its implementation feasible. In retrospect, the new technology being promoted may be seen by some, in the words of Cohen and March (1974), as an example of a solution seeking out a problem to which it might be the answer.

Stage 2: The Narrative Evolution. Narratives begun in the Creation Stage become elaborated and more widely disseminated. Stories of successful implementation are increasingly distributed and the innovation hailed. The narrative focuses on claimed benefits; little attention is given to potential costs. There are few counternarratives, and those that attempt to relate traditional counternarratives are labeled as apologists out of touch with contemporary needs. It is asserted that the new technique has been widely adopted, if not throughout the system then at least by the higher status members of the system. The allegations of wide-spread adoption persuades even more institutions to adopt through imitation or to maintain legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan, 1992). Consultants, champions, purveyors of the technology, and adopters increasingly circulate within the organizational system, making presentations at professional meetings and writing articles for professional journals that contribute to the diffusion of the innovation. These presentations serve to certify and reinforce the status of the person making them, the progressiveness of the institutions which are mentioned, and the quality of organizational leadership in those institutions. Some of the stories of success prove to be attractive to newspapers, newsmagazines and other agents of mass media eager to spot new trends, so that name and/or acronym of the innovation, and simplistic statements of its foundational ideas, become popularly diffused. Organizations adopting the innovation are applauded for acknowledging the existence of serious problems, engaging in efforts to improve and reform, and recognizing that system and social benefits should outweigh selfish interests of organizational participants. Organizations not adopting the

innovation may be criticized for being resistant to change, conservative, wasteful, and self-interested.

Stage 3. The Time Lag

There is a time-lag between the time the new technique is created and disseminated, and the time at which user reactions and independent analyses become widely available. Stories of successful adoption continue to be disseminated during this period. These stories are usually written by, or about, organizational members with vested interests in being seen as being associated with a successful program, and whose leadership is thereby given visibility and praise. At the same time, revisionist and cautionary stories begin to surface, some reminding organizations of the unfulfilled promises of previous innovations, and others suggesting that not all those adopting the innovation have been successful with it. Scholars and others (who may have vested interests different from the promoters of the innovation) begin to disseminate analyses of data which were not available previously. During this time lag period, the acceptance of the innovation peaks, and the pace of new adopters slows as those most likely to adopt have already done so.

Stage 4. The Narrative Devolution

As the more recent revisionist analyses are disseminated, the power of the original creation narrative is challenged by a new narrative of skepticism. Enthusiasm for the new technique based on initial reports of success becomes tempered by countervailing reports of failure as outcomes fall short of unrealistic expectations. Data collected by scholars and other observers studying the new technique suggest that the original claims of success were either overstated or were not sustained, organizational performance was not improved in the predicted manner, and claims of the extent of adoption had been exaggerated. Surveys of users reflect increased dissatisfaction. Acceptance of the new technique diminishes, and journal and newspaper commentaries report on the reversal of fortune and declare the new technique to be "dead as a pet rock" (Byrne, 1997, p. 47).

Stage 5. The Resolution of Dissonance

There is significant temporal overlap between Stages 4 and 5, but they are separated here for purposes of analyses because they appear to have different dynamic properties. As champions and adopters see the demise of the innovation which only recently they had vigorously advocated, there is a need to account for its failure in ways that protect both their status and their ideological views. "A man with conviction is a hard man to change" (Festinger, Riecken & Schachter, 1956), so that it should not be unexpected that those who support the premises of a fad are not dissuaded from their views merely because it has not been successful. Analyses of these seven fads reveal many of the rationalizations used, the most frequent of which are lack of leadership, intransigence of followers, improper implementation, and lack of resources. It is also noted that the innovation, which had been thought of during its narrative evolution stage as a defined set of specific ideas, had developed by the narrative devolution stage into many program which, although sharing the same name, are in many ways quite different. It is thus possible to maintain faith in the "true" innovation, and ascribe failure to the flaws of its mutations.

The least frequent response to failure is to consider the possibility that the new technique itself may have been based on invalid premises, making successful implementation either highly improbable or, in some cases, impossible. Identifying failure as the result of weaknesses of specific individuals, unforeseeable external forces, or correctable flaws in implementation, sets the stage for either reinventing the innovation and recycling it with minor modifications and a major change of name (Rogers, 1995), or for proposing a better innovation (clearly labeled as "not a fad") which is claimed as both necessary and sufficient for organizational improvement, and in which the unfortunate problems leading to the abandonment of the earlier innovation have been corrected. The Creation Stage begins anew, and the stages of the cycle are repeated.

The Movement of Fads Between Sectors

Each of the management fads considered in this study was initially implemented in either business or governmental organizations before being diffused into higher education. There is relatively little overlap between the interorganizational networks of the innovation source groups, and the higher education systems in which they were later applied. Members of both academic and non-academic organizations have more association and communication with those inside their own sector than with those outside. Most people in different sectors read different journals, attend different meetings, share different values and perspectives, and live in different organizational cultures. This discontinuity produces a culture lag so that events which are disseminated and generally known in one sector may not be immediately known in another.

As the apparently successful implementation of a management innovation in the original sector becomes conventional wisdom as part of its Narrative Evolution Stage, groups or individuals concerned with issues of organizational efficiency and effectiveness suggest that the innovation may be suitable for adoption in new settings such as higher education. Exactly how the transition between sectors is accomplished is unclear. It may be related to the increasing availability of stories in the popular press, but research on the adoption of innovation (Rogers, 1995) suggests that interpersonal communications are more effective than mass communications in disseminating innovations. Moreover, interpersonal communications about innovations are more effective when they occur between individuals who are similar or, as Rogers (p. 286) calls, them, homophilous, while members of different sectors are more likely to be dissimilar (or heterophilous). This suggests that a major vector of management innovation in higher education may be boundary spanning individuals with homophilous identities in both the non-academic and academic sectors. These might include business leaders or legislators serving on higher education boards of trustees, college presidents appointed to business boards of directors, professional associations formed at least in part to maintain linkages between higher education and external groups, academics who read journals in multi-disciplinary areas such as business or human resource management, professors of business or public administration, and consultants who solicit clients in both the education and non-education sectors.

As a consequence of culture lag, champions in academic institutions become familiar with innovations in the non-academic sector at that time in the non-academic sector's Narrative Evolution Stage in which expectations are high and increased levels of adoption are claimed .

Unaware of the revisionist analyses taking place during the latter part of the Time Lag and early part of the Narrative Devolution Stages in the non-academic sector, but persuaded by the enthusiastic reports developed during the earlier Narrative Evolution Stage, champions in higher education begin the Creation Stage in their sector. The higher education sector then recapitulates the cycle of the non-academic sector, but in Academic Procession-like fashion, always one to two stages behind. This relationship is depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2 about here

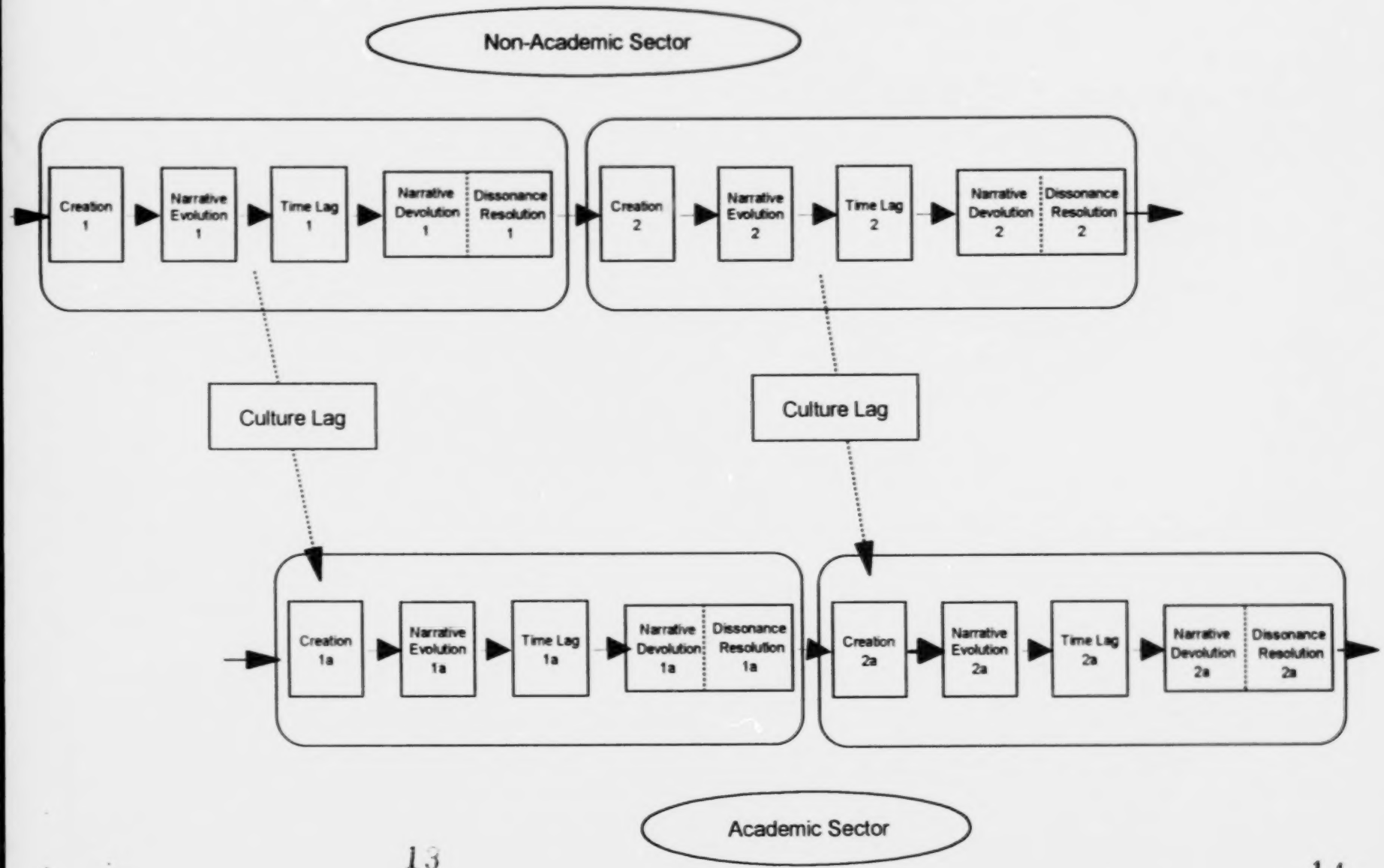
Similarities and Differences Between Sectors

Innovations are ideas or practices perceived as new by the adopting organization (Rogers, 1995), regardless of whether they are objectively new, so it is not surprising that the process of fad adoption seen in academic settings is similar to that followed by the same innovation in non-academic settings. In both sectors, initial decisions to adopt management innovations appear to be based on subjective judgments disseminated by homophilous peers within a system, rather than analyses of empirical data, and in both sectors the momentum of innovators and early adopters is accelerated during the Narrative Evolution Stage. When 10 to 20 percent of a population has adopted an innovation it has reached the "take-off" point (Rogers, 1995, p. 259). After this time the fate of an innovation is in the hands of a group that Rogers refers to as the "Early Majority." Compared with innovators and early adopters, the Early Majority is more deliberative, and has a longer decision time. Acceptance by the Early Majority sets the stage for further acceleration and possible adoption of the innovation by all members of the social system, thus accepting it as part of standard practice. Rejection by the Early Majority leads to a drop in adoption rates and eventual discontinuance within the system, thus identifying the innovation as a fad.

It is during the Time Lag of Stage 3 that a major difference between fads in the academic and non-academic sectors appears as they move toward Narrative Devolution. In the non-academic sector, it is a period during which data of various kinds are collected, analyzed, and distributed within the sector. These data may come from surveys of the extent of adoption within the sector, scholarly comparisons of differences in outcomes between adopters and non adopters, or surveys of users which assess their satisfaction with the new procedures. Results may be presented quantitatively. In contrast, in the academic sector, information collected during the Time Lag of Stage 3, with infrequent exceptions, is limited to non-quantitative claims of the extent of adoption, and subjective judgments of outcomes by champions or adopters. There are few published examples in the academic sector of attempts to assess the institutional consequences of a management fad through data that provide evidence either of organizational outcomes or of the satisfaction of users.

This difference suggests that the two sectors respond to different kinds of data. An innovation's meaning in either sector is not self-evident, but instead is "gradually worked out through a process of social construction" (Rogers, 1995, p. xvii). It is stereotypical, but perhaps not without some justification, to think of business as being data-driven and bottom-line oriented; quantitative data is sought after and considered to be of great consequence when it is produced.

Figure 2. The Movement of Fads Between Sectors



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Results can be measured in profit and loss statements, numbers are important, and decisions to retain or abandon an innovation can be made rapidly. In the more loosely-coupled academic sector, quantitative measures are suspect. Interpretations develop slowly, and it takes longer for the meaning of an innovation to be shared by organizational participants. The data to which the business sector responds may move quickly up the system, while in the academic sector it may move more slowly as counternarratives of shared authority and other myths begin to respond to the original narrative of efficiency. The Narrative Devolution Stage may be initiated by quantitative data in the non-academic sector, and by interpretive data in the academic sector.

In addition to responding to different kinds of data, the meaning of "adoption" may differ between the sectors. In both the academic and non-academic sectors, organizations may claim to have adopted an innovation without truly having done so. However, the hierarchical structures and legal authority systems of the non-academic sector make it more likely that senior management can impose management innovations that may affect the institution's technical core. In contrast, the unique dual governance structure and loosely-coupled processes of academic institutions buffer educational from administrative procedures and permit subgroups to operate with significant autonomy. This makes it easier in higher education for an innovation to be publicly "adopted," but not actually implemented in a way that affects core institutional processes. In this way, academic institutions may have greater opportunities than non-academic to engage in what might be termed the "virtual adoption" of fads.

TQM/CQI, for example, which entered higher education through business, was identified by senior academic administrators in a 1993 survey as being utilized by 70 percent of all colleges and universities (El-Khawas). But by 1997 even TQM/CQI's avid advocates acknowledged that fewer than a dozen institutions had implemented it as a central component of their program (Marchese, 1997). More recent data suggests that fewer than 15 percent of all higher education institutions ever experimented with any aspect of TQM/CQI even in the most superficial way, and perhaps no more than a hundred seriously attempted to implement TQM/CQI techniques in portions of their institutional management (Birnbaum & Deshotels, 1998). Academic institutions may have the ability to respond to fads as they respond to educational reforms - they may adopt them as policy, but never really implement them (Cuban, 1990). Because business and government can impose fad processes that influence what people actually do, they may be more sensitive to data that may confirm or deny the validity of the fad practice. In contrast, because the 'adoption" of fads at academic institutions may be primarily symbolic and have little effect on what most people do, there may be less emphasis on collecting and analyzing quantitative data that can validate or invalidate the innovation, and more emphasis on collecting impressionistic data that justifies the original adoption decision.

Virtual adoption is essentially superficial, although at some institutions where adoption initiatives of senior administrators have been particularly intense it may lead to some localized and undue disruption and discomfort. However, for the most part it is unlikely to have significant impact on the institutional core. Virtual adoption means that academic institutions may find it easier than other organizations both to "adopt" management fads and to abandon them. Since the

fad has been embraced only by the senior administration, and not the technical core, neither adoption nor abandonment requires significant attention or effort from most of the organization's members, or has a major impact on their daily lives. In this way, the adoption of academic management fads is similar to the academic propensity regularly to form societies for the purpose of making silk purses out of sows' ears. As Cornford put it ninety years ago, "This tendency is not as dangerous as it may seem; for it may be observed that the sows, after taking their washing with a grunt or two, trundle back to the wallow; and the purse-market is quoted as firm" (1964/1908, p. 13). Virtual adoption of fads allows an institution to have its cake and eat it too. Public claims of adopting an externally-hailed innovation certify an institution's progressive attitude and concern for efficiency and improved management. Private isolation of the fad protects the institution from the disruptive effects it would have if it were really adopted.

Discussion

Suggestions by previous analysts of the existence of regularities in the management fad adoption process in higher education are supported by patterns in this cross-case analysis of data describing the life cycle of seven management innovations. Management fads in higher education originate in non-academic sectors, are disseminated in colleges and universities through the development of powerful narratives even as the fad is being challenged in its original sector, are virtually adopted in ways that recognize its symbolic importance while minimizing its potential disruption, and are eventually abandoned. This pattern is common, but not universal, and there are isolated exceptions. On a small number of campuses, a fad may take hold and be maintained over an extended period, long after most institutions have rejected it. Occasionally, the fad may be integrated into an institution's culture and become a means by which the institution differentiates itself from others. These exceptional successes provide the evidence true believers may use to argue that the innovation is sound, and that its generalized failure is the result of faulty implementation rather than an inadequate conceptual base. But perhaps a more realistic lesson to be learned is that in the context of the great diversity of colleges and universities in the United States, an idea may find fertile soil in some microclimates, even as it proves to be sterile in most others. If the success of management fads over the past 40 years is measured solely by the extent to which they have been adopted and maintained in their entirety in institutions of higher education, it can it be said with confidence that these innovations have uniformly failed.

Still, management fads in the academic sector continue to be created or reinvented despite the absence of data suggesting that they have been successful, and in the face of the failure of most of them to be widely adopted by the sector. Why does this happen? Those who develop the fads, as well as those who support them, appear to view academic organizations through the lens of an organizational paradigm that emphasizes the importance of goals, rationality, and causality. The acceptance of this paradigm leads those who believe it to choose problems "that while the paradigm is taken for granted, can be assumed to have solutions" (Kuhn, 1970, p. 37). Fads therefore are proposed solutions to puzzles seen as problems because of the paradigm being used. Management fads, even though they may sometimes be explicitly claimed by their creators to reflect a new paradigm, in reality reflect the old paradigms expected as part of "ordinary science."

Although fads fail, the paradigm supporting them remains. As Kuhn pointed out, failure of a paradigm to solve problems does not by itself negate the paradigm; it merely suggests to its adherents that the puzzle has not yet been solved, and that further work is necessary. For example, after acknowledging that TQM/CQI has been ignored or rejected by most potential users, advocates still point to a small number of limited but presumably successful programs to claim that the system does work; it just isn't being implemented properly (Marchese, 1997). It is typical to deny the failure of fads by arguing that others have used it successfully, it takes time to overcome past practices, and results will be achieved in the future (Nohria & Berkley, 1994). Because of these arguments, there are no data that can convince a true believer that a fad isn't effective; the positive value of a fad therefore cannot be disproved. Narratives cannot be overturned by countervailing evidence, but only by a different paradigm or "an equally straightforward narrative that tells a better story." (Roe, 1994, p. 40). Unless and until higher education is able to tell its story with a narrative more compelling than market-oriented economic utility, it is safe to assume that another fad, similar in many ways to the ones we have seen over the past 40 years is around the corner, and it will go through the stages within sectors and the phases between sectors described here.

Fads develop outside higher education and then are imported. I can think of no example in which a management innovation originally implemented in higher education subsequently has been explicitly exported to business. Why is business in the lead? Some may say it's because business is more concerned with management than is education. A more cynical suggestion is that businesses have more consultants than education who make money by proposing and marketing fads. Why do consultants give priority to marketing fads to business over education? As Willie Sutton said about why he robbed banks, "because that's where the money is."

Although management fads in higher education have not had the positive outcomes promised by their proponents, it is also true that the loose coupling of academic organizations has prevented the dire consequences predicted by fad opponents. At the same time, it would be a mistake to believe that fads have no consequences at all for the organizations or systems that adopt them, either in reality or virtually. Some of these consequences may be negative, as people become cynical and resistant to new ideas, the judgment of leaders is questioned, and funds and energy are seen as being diverted from important institutional activities. But there may be positive consequences as well if fads "are kept in the proper perspective and incorporated into the collective wisdom of a company" (Rifkin, 1994, p. 11). Fads may have important latent functions in cuing attention, promoting action, and increasing variety (Birnbaum, forthcoming). Management fads may have had some positive outcomes for some support activities at some institutions. And even after the fad itself has faded from view, its residual legacy, like the smile of the Cheshire Cat, may remain and indirectly influence institutional structure and values (Bohl & Luthans, 1996). Even when fads fail, they are important; the more we understand them, the greater the opportunity to increase their potential for institutional improvement and decrease their potential for institutional disruption.

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